

CHARLES E. SCHUMER
NEW YORKCOMMITTEE
BANKING
JUDICIARY
RULESUnited States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 1, 2003

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of SecretaryUCB
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Dear Chairman Powell,

I am writing to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to expedite the Syracuse City School District's appeal of their wrongly denied E Rate application. As you know, the Schools and Libraries Division recently reversed course and informed Syracuse that its application was wrongly denied. Although I am gratified to learn of the ultimate approval of the application, I write to express my concern about any further delays in transmitting funding to Syracuse.

Syracuse submitted its application for E Rate discounts in January of 2002 and anticipated receiving funding in the Fall of 2002. Fifteen months later, in mid-March, the Schools and Libraries Division informed Syracuse that its application had been denied. Fortunately, the Director of the Schools and Libraries Division informed Syracuse late last week that the application should have been granted. This is good news indeed for the children of Syracuse.

I am concerned, however, that Syracuse will now need to go through the appeal process to receive the funding that the Schools and Libraries Division agrees it should have. Further delays in E Rate funding for Syracuse are not only unwarranted based on the initial wrongful denial of the application but may also jeopardize the learning opportunities in store for these children. The District's matching funds may be redirected for other uses if the FCC does not provide the E Rate funding quickly.

As you know, the E Rate program provides local communities with the financial tools necessary to enhance education and bring all schools into the information age. The program is targeted to helping children with the highest poverty levels and greatest need gain access to these resources. This program is an important part of our commitment to universal telecommunications services for our underserved communities around the country.

The Syracuse School District created an innovative and ambitious plan to wire 22 of its 36 schools for access to the Internet and telecommunications. Teachers in these schools will use the Internet and video programming to enhance the learning opportunities for the children in these schools where 90% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunches.

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Syracuse's plan would effectively level the playing field for 13,000 children facing the highest poverty rates and the lowest access to technology for learning at home.

I hope that you will consider expediting Syracuse's appeal so that the children in Syracuse can take immediate advantage of the benefits of technology and Internet access in their education. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

cc: Commissioner Abernathy
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Commissioner Adelstein



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